
***The Department of the Treasury
Office of Inspector General***

Report Title

PROTECTING THE PUBLIC: Security, Inspection, and Targeting of Vessel Containers at the Port of Philadelphia Can Be Improved (OIG-03-060; issued February 21, 2003) (Limited Official Use)

This report is not available on the Department of the Treasury Office of Inspector General (OIG) website. For further information, please contact the OIG Office of Counsel at (202) 927-0650 or send an email to webmaster@oig.treas.gov.

Synopsis

The U.S. Customs Service's (Customs) original mission of collecting revenue has expanded to include ensuring that all goods and services entering and exiting the United States comply with U.S. laws and regulations. A major goal of Customs is to prevent the smuggling of drugs into the country by creating an effective drug interdiction capability that disrupts smuggling organizations. Interdicting illegal drugs entering the United States is a key component of the Nation's drug control strategy. After September 11, 2001, Customs changed its primary mission from drug interdiction to combating terrorism.

Our audit of the Port of Philadelphia was part of a series of planned audits at Customs seaports. The objective of these audits was to determine whether Customs targets, secures, and inspects vessel containers to prevent smuggling of implements of terrorism, drugs, and other contraband in an effective manner. The other ports we audited were Port Everglades, Los Angeles/Long Beach, Charleston, and New York/Newark. Together, these ports represent about two-thirds of the vessel container cargo entering the United States.

At the Port of Philadelphia, we found that additional actions were necessary to intensify the inspection of vessel containers, better document inspection results, and tighten physical security. Our report provided 11 recommendations to the Customs Port Director to address these areas.

Customs was divested from the Department of the Treasury to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) in March 2003 pursuant to the Homeland Security Act of 2002. Accordingly, audit follow-up is the responsibility of DHS management.